

THE
Irish BLASTERS:
OR, THE
Votaries of BACCHUS.

*But these as natural Brute Beasts made to be taken
and destroyed, speak evil of the Things that they
understand not, and shall utterly perish in their
own Corruption. 2 Pet. ii. 12.*

Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere Divos.
VIRG. ÆN. 6. 620.



D U B L I N:
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The IRISH BLASTERS.

The following Passage of History is little more than a Translation of Part of the 39th Book of Livy, which being very applicable to the present Circumstances of Religion amongst us, is thought proper to be printed, in hopes that the Christian Magistrate may be spirited up by the Example of a Roman, to do as much for the Honour of the true God, as Posthumius did for false Deities; and that the infamous Society of Men, known by the Title of BLASTERS, may as successfully be punished as the Roman Bacchanalians; that Heaven may be saved the Expence of Thunder, which otherwise may come in such a Hurry of Vengeance, as to destroy the Righteous with the Wicked.

THE Senate had much at heart to disperse and punish a monstrous Society of Debauchees, which had been formed at *Rome*, under the Name of *Bacchanalians*. The Consuls were ordered to enquire after the Offenders; and it is not to be expressed with what Zeal, *Rome* prosecuted

prosecuted the Heads and Accomplices, of this clandestine Association of Men, given up to all kinds of Wickedness. The bare Recital of it is enough to make one tremble. Opulence, no doubt, and the Concourse of foreign Nations, were what facilitated the forming this infamous Cabal, in a City which had hitherto shewn the utmost Abhorrence to all Incontinence.

Some unknown *Greek*, a Man of an obscure Birth, but artful, insinuating, and very corrupt in Morals, had landed in *Hetruria*. In his own Country he had been initiated in the Mysteries of a Sect, which held their Assemblies in the Name, and under the Protection, of *Bacchus*. But we have Reason to believe, that these abominable Conventicles had not their first Rise in *Greece*. Their Origin was more remote. There is so great a Resemblance between the execrable Ceremonies, which the Children of *Ammon*, and the *Israelites* themselves performed in *The Valley of Tophet*, and the Mysteries of the *Bacchanalia*, as makes it probable, that the one was an Imitation of the other. If we only put the Name of *Bacchus* instead of that of *Moloch*, we shall find, that the same Sacrifices of Modesty, and the Lives of Men, were made in private to the former, as to the latter. The *Jews* borrowed these Customs from their Neighbours, afterwards they reached to the *Greeks*, and at length were fatally propagated in *Italy* too. The living God had severely punished them in his own People. And the *Romans* so severely punished them in their Republick, that they exterminated them; at least, for a time. It is well known, that *Hetruria* was

was very ready to receive all Novelties in religious Worship. It was from thence, that *Auspices* and *Augurs* were brought to *Rome*; and from thence likewise these *Bacchanals* were brought to the Capital, where they produced a terrible Corruption of Manners. The *Greek* beforementioned had made himself the Head, or if you will, the Priest of this secret Association. He did not gain himself Followers, by appearing in publick, and openly proclaiming the Power of a beneficent God. He only whispered his infamous Doctrines in private. The Women were first seduced; all the Assemblies consisted only of them, for some time, and Priestesses were chosen out of them. Afterwards the Men were admitted, and the Assemblies were held in a Wood, consecrated to the Goddess *Simila*, or as others *Stimula*.

But it was not so much Curiosity, as the prevailing Corruption of Mens Hearts, that gained the Impostor Credit. Wine and good Cheer were the Attractives first made use of, to draw intemperate Men to the Feast of *Bacchus*. Their Numbers encreased; the Feast was held by Night; and the *Greeks* took care to introduce among them, such young Persons of both Sexes, as were most capable of irritating the Passions. They were first enlivened with Wine and Dancing, then the Place was designedly darkened, and this Darkness seemed to take from them all manner of Modesty. Their Licentiousness was then pursued without any Restraint. The Night, which was begun with Drunkenness, ended with Incest, and Brutalities, yet more detestable. Nor was all this

this enough. The little Time they had, before their Understandings were quite drowned in Wine, was spent in forging Contracts and Bonds, and combining together to bear false Witness. Nay, it often happened, that those whom it was their Interest to destroy, were dispatched by a Dagger, or a Dose of Poison. Many Persons disappeared all on a sudden, and could no where be found. Violence and Treachery were as much practised in these nocturnal Assemblies, as all manner of Lusts. In order to stifle the Cries of those whom they assassinated, or sacrificed by Violence to their Debaucheries, they made a great Noise with Drums and Cymbals; and the Shouts of this *Bacchanalian* Troop, were louder than the Instruments. Nevertheless, as the *Rendezvous* of the People was in a solitary unknown Place, the Senate was not informed of it till the following Accident.

A young *Roman* named *Æbutius*, had lost his Father in the Flower of his Age; and *Dunonia* his Mother had married again. *T. Sempronius Blæsus* the Father-in-law, was a violent and profane Man; and *Ebutius*, according to his Birth, must naturally have come to the Enjoyment of a great Estate. His Father was a *Roman Knight*; a Mark of Distinction, which was neither obtained, nor kept by any, but such as were very rich. At first, Guardians were assigned for the young *Roman*; but he lost them too soon by Death. Then the Care of his Estate fell into the Hands of his Mother, and his Father-in-law; and the latter was both involved in Debt to a great Degree, and

and responsible for his Ward's Estate. This gave him Uneasiness; and *Duronia* and *Sempronius* could find out no other Remedy, but to get rid of her Son, and his Son-in-law, whose just Demands were so troublesome to them; and the Husband and Wife thought the new Assembly of the *Bacchanalians*, with which they were acquainted, the most proper Place and Method, for the Execution of their barbarous Parricide. Besides, *Æbutius*'s Manners, which they had neglected to cultivate, seemed to favour their Design. He was scarce grown up to be a young Man, before he fell into the Vices of that Age. He had taken a Mistress near his own House, and his Attachment to her was well known. The Mother therefore took her Son aside, and addressed her self to him in this artful manner. *In your last Sickness, Son, when I was so much alarmed for fear of your Death, I applied to the Gods for Relief for you. We had just heard of a new Worship of Bacchus. I made a Vow to initiate my self in the Mysteries of it, and you recovered, I must therefore discharge my Vow, and you must prepare your self by Continence for ten Days, for entering into an Association, which will afterwards furnish you with new Pleasures to gratify your Inclinations. After the necessary Preparation is over, I will lead you to the Bacchanals myself.* *Æbutius* at first readily complied with the Desires of *Duronia*; but he could not help acquainting his Mistress with the ten Days Continence his Mother required of him. The Person with whom he was in love, was a Courtisan of great Beauty, named

Hispala

Hispala Fescenia. When she was yet but a Slave, she had gotten a great deal of Money, by her infamous Prostitutions; and when she became rich, after she had bought her Freedom, she fell in love with young *Æbutius*, and soon captivated him with her Careesses. But notwithstanding her shameful Commerce with him, this Woman had more Honour and Probity, than Women of her Profession generally have. Besides, her Love for *Æbutius* was boundless. She supplied him with Necessaries, and supported him under the severe Treatment of his Father-in-law, and a Mother, who often suffered him to want. Nor was all this enough for *Hispala*. After the Death of her *Patron*, who had procured her Freedom, and who had been her Guardian according to Law, she had obtained Leave to make her Will, and had left all her Estate to *Æbutius*, after her Death. The bare mention the young *Roman* made of getting himself initiated in the Mysteries of *Bacchus*, made her tremble with Horror. *Into what an Abyss of Misery, said she to him, are you going to involve your self! It were better that both You and I should die, than that you should embark in so dangerous an Undertaking. May the Evils that threaten you, fall on the Heads of those who have engaged you in it.* Upon this, the great Concern and Uneasiness of *Hispala*, soon affected the Heart of *Æbutius*; and he would know the Particulars of the Perils which threatened him. *Your Father-in-law, added she, wants to expose your Life and Honour to the most horrible Dangers. I say nothing of your Mother. My Affection for you makes me respect.*

spect her. Nevertheless, both she and her Husband have conspired to take away your Life. And she said no more. *Æbutius* was forced to use the utmost Entreaties, and the most pressing Instances with her, before he could prevail on *Hispala* to reveal the Secrets of the Association. She had formerly been of it herself, and had bound herself by the most frightful Oaths, never to betray the Secret. But at length she called all the Gods and Goddesses to witness, that her only Motive to break her Promises, was to save the Life of him who was the most dear to her of any Person in the World; and then she went on thus. *When I was a Slave I attended my Mistress to this Sanctuary of Iniquity. But I swear to you I never have been there since I have gained my Liberty. I know, that of all the young Men who have frequented it, not one has arrived at the Age of twenty Years. They no sooner come to the Place, but they are carried to a detestable Priest; and this Barbarian devotes them as a Victim, to Death, and Lust. He takes them aside into a private Place, where, without any Scruple or Regard, Violence is offered to their Modesty, and often to their Lives.*

This Discourse, which seemed sincere, affected *Æbutius*; and as soon as he returned home, he protested to his Mother, that he absolutely renounced her Vow, to associate him with the Bacchanalians. *Duronia* easily guessed, that her Son had been instructed by *Hispala*, and said; *This is that Enchantress, that Wretch, your Mistress, who has perverted your Understanding, and corrupted your Heart. It*

is *she who has taught you to despise the Commands of your Mother, and to be ungrateful to the Gods. Get you out of my House, and appear in my Sight no more!* The young *Roman* found a safe Retreat in the *House of Æbutia*, his Father's Sister. But he was forced to declare to his Aunt the Reason why he left his Mother's House. *Æbutia* thought the Excuse a very just one, and urged her Nephew to inform the *Consul Postumius*, of what he had heard of the infamous Lusts and Murders of this nocturnal Assembly, in the Grove of *Stimula*. *Æbutius* was twice brought before the *Consul*, who heard him favourably, and carefully informed himself of the Matter. Nor was this all. He likewise enquired into the Character of *Æbutia*, who had excited her Nephew to declare such horrible Things; and he was informed by *Sulpicia*, his Mother-in-law, that *Æbutia* was a Woman of a good Understanding, and her Reputation blameless. But after all, one Informer was not a sufficient Foundation for the Noise this Affair would make, when brought before the Senate. Besides, *Æbutius* himself had not been an Eye-witness of the Crimes he divulged. For the greater Certainty therefore, it was necessary to have *Hispala* examined; but it was beneath the Dignity and Gravity of an Head of the Republick, either to send for a Courtisan to his House, or to pay her a Visit. All manner of Decency was strictly kept up in *Rome*. The *Consul* therefore chose to have an Interview with *Hispala*, at the House of *Sulpicia*, a Lady, whose Virtue raised her above Suspicion; and he would

would have the Lady present at the Conversation. When the Courtisan received a Message from *Æbutia*, that *Sulpicia* desired she would pay her a *Viit*, she shuddered for Fear; and her Terror increased, when she saw the *Lictors*, and all the Train of a *Consul*, in the Porch of the House where she was. But when she was brought into an inner Apartment, she was surprized to see no Body there, but the *Consul* and his Mother-in-law. Then *Postumius* said to her; *You have nothing to fear, if you have Honesty enough to conceal nothing from us. Did you never assist at the Assemblies which were held by Night in the Grove of Stimula?* At these Words *Hispala* trembled exceedingly, and her Voice and Breath failed her at once. When she was recovered from her first Fright, she said, *I own, when I was very young, and a Slave, I was carried thither by my Mistress, and initiated. Since I have obtained my Freedom, I have never been there, and I know not what is done there. The Confession you make us, replied the Consul, of your having been initiated in the Mysteries of Bacchus, is such a Mark of Sincerity, as puts you in a fair Way for a Pardon. But that you will never obtain, if you conceal from us any of the Circumstances, which we can discover by any other Means. Be ingenuous; the whole has been revealed to us by a Person whom you made your Corfident.* These last Words threw *Hispala* into a violent Passion. *The Traitor!* cried she, meaning *Æbutius*; and then recovering her Spirits, she threw herself at *Sulpicia's* Feet. *Do you believe, said she to her, what a Woman of my*

Charter says to a young Man, whom she would ensnare? I gave him that Account of the Bacchanalians only to keep him to my self. The Consul saw there was Dissimulation in these Words, and seemed exasperated by them: and then Sulpicia interposed. On one Hand she endeavoured to appease the Anger of Postumius, and on the other, advised the Courtisan to conceal nothing. And at length, after having inveighed against the Treachery of Æbutius, and called the Gods to witness, that Necessity alone forced her to divulge the Secrets, which she had sworn to conceal, she addressed her self to the Consul, in this manner. *Into what Dangers, my Lord, am I going to throw my self, out of Deserence to you! I am going to stir up Heaven and Earth against me. Perhaps indeed the Gods may pardon my Breach of Oaths; but what can I expect at the Hands of Men?* A Company of furious People will all fall upon me; and my Ruin is certain. Banish me therefore far from Rome, and find out a Retreat, where a wretched Woman may spend the rest of her Days in Peace. Then the Consul promised her, that the Republick should take her under her Protection; and Hispala went on, and revealed the whole Secret. The Bacchanalians at Rome, said she, were originally only Assemblies of Women, which were held but three Times a Year. Women presided in them; and Women did the Affairs of Priestesses there. Till at length the Government of the Society fell into the Hands of a Woman named Paculla, who introduced Men among them, and particularly the Children

Children and Husbands of the Initiated. Then the Assemblies were held by Night, and repeated five Times in a Month. And as if the Darkness had made every Thing lawful, this Concourse of Men and Women ran into the most horrible Excesses. They, whose remains of Modesty made them more timorous, or less abandoned, were put to Death. The Crimes received a Sanction from an Appearance of Religion; and nothing was scrupled under the Protection of a God. Men heated with Wine took Javelins in their Hands, and when they had stupified themselves with Turnings, and Agitations of Body, pronounced a kind of Oracles. The Women with their Hair dishevelled, and like so many Furies, armed themselves with Flambeaux made of Bitumen, Sulphur, and Lime, lighted them, ran and plunged them into the Tyber, and drew them out again before the Fire had extinguished them. Those who were reserved, and scrupled the maddest Brutalities, were caught up into the Air by Engines, then thrown down into subterraneous Caverns, and never were seen more. The rest said that the Gods took them to themselves. In short, the Number of the Initiated is now exceedingly increased. You would take their Assembly for a whole Nation of People. Men and Women of great Distinction appear there; and but two Years ago, they made it a Rule to admit no Body for the future, who was past twenty. In the Flower of Youth, People, say they, are more easy to be seduced, and more ready to give themselves up to Pleasure.

Which

Which said, *Hispala* threw herself at the *Consul's* Feet, and cried out, *I again repeat it, my Lord; after the Declaration that I have made, I can be safe only at a Distance from hence, Banishment is all the Favour I ask.* However, *Postumius* did not care to remove a Witness so necessary for the publick Good: But desired his Mother-in-Law to give her a Retreat with her. Accordingly *Sulpicia* allotted *Hispala* an Apartment at the Top of her House; and the Stair-Case of that Apartment leading into a Street, it was turned. So that *Hispala* could not go out, without going thro' the House; and all her Moveables and Effects were brought thither. As for *Æbutius*, he was committed to the Care of one of the *Consul's* Clients. And now *Postumius* being supported with such strong Proof, no longer hesitated about making a Report to the Senate of his Discovery. As soon as he had opened the whole Scene to *The Conscript Fathers*, they were struck with Horrour. Some reflected on the Danger such an Assembly as this might bring on the whole Body of the Republick. Others were afraid they should find their Relations or Friends among the Criminals. Nevertheless they passed a Decree, containing these five Articles. 1. *They returned Thanks to Postumius for having taken care to make this important Discovery, without Noise, or Scandal.* 2. *They appointed him and his Colleague to get more full Informations.* 3. *They put Æbutius and Hispala under the Protection of the Senate; and by their Promises invited others to come and give Information.* 4. *They*

4. They gave the Consuls leave to search in Towns, and peculiar Jurisdictions, for the Priests and Priestesses of this Association. And 5thly, They forbad the Initiated in the Bacchanals to assemble; and commanded all the People of Italy, to inform against those, who had polluted themselves with the Abominations practised there. The Consuls began their Proceedings with ordering the *Curule Aediles* to seize the Persons of the Priests and Priestesses of the Assembly, and keep them safe till they were examined; not in the publick Prisons, but in private Houses. Then they committed it to the care of the *Plebeian Aediles*, to prevent the holding any religious Assemblies in secret. And lastly they ordered the *Triumviri Capitales* to station the Watchmen so as to hinder all nocturnal Assemblies, to take care that no Part of the City was set on Fire, and to hire Men to watch the Houses on this Side the *Tyber*. These Orders and Precautions alarmed all *Rome*. The People were assembled in the *Forum*. And *Postumius* mounted *The Tribune of Harangues*, and spoke thus.

‘ O Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, and all the tutelary Gods of this Empire, favour the Enterprise I have in Hand. It ever *Consul* ought to invoke the Name of the ancient Gods of the Country, I ought now to do it, when I am going to suppress a false religious Worship, and purge the old Religion of it. Execrable Impieties, joined with Assassinations and Debaucheries, are introduced into *Rome*. All my Difficulty is, to know how to represent them to you in a proper Light. To represent them

as they are, would be to make you tremble with Horror. To conceal any Part of them, would be lessening the just Rage with which you ought to be fired, at such detestable Prophanations. Let me say what I will, I can never find Words bad enough for the Heinousness of the Crimes I am going to mention. *Bacchanals* were first introduced into several Parts of *Italy*, and from thence brought to *Rome*. You cannot but know that these Assemblies have been held in the Neighbourhood of this City. Their Shouts, and the Noise of their Instruments, have often disturbed your Rest in the Night; though you knew not the Causes of them. You thought them lawful Rejoycings, authorized by Religion, and allowed by the Laws; or perhaps you thought this Society consisted only of a few Men and Women of Pleasure. But we have been much mistaken, *Romans*. The Number of these Associates much surpasses what we ever thought of it. They are reckoned to be no less than several Thousands. Indeed Women first hearkened to these Seducers. But afterwards Men, as effeminate as themselves, followed their Example. And what Obscenities have they not suffered, or committed? And if they have not yet conspired against the Republick, it is only because they first want to increase their Strength and Credit. And so far as we can judge by what is past, their Number will soon increase, so as to become formidable to the State. These Sorts of Associations

tions have ever been suspected. Our Ancestors would never suffer any Number of People to meet but when it was necessary to assemble a Sort of Army on the *Janiculus* while the *Comitia by Centuries* were held, or to assemble the *Tribes*, or to invite the People to come and hear the Harangues of the Magistrates. All other Assemblies were ever thought unlawful. And whenever a Multitude was gathered together, it was judged necessary to have a lawful Head, to make it a lawful Assembly. But where is the Head nominated by publick Authority for these *Bacchanals*? Men and Women meet together at Night, in a common *Rendezvous*. Most of the Initiated are inconsiderate young People, who are scarce old enough to serve in our Armies. What Education must they then receive, in the midst of Licentiousness and Brutality? Shall we find any of them fit to fill up the Places of those brave *Legionaries*, who have conquered three Parts of the World for us? Will they fight to defend the Honour of our Wives and Children, after they have been brought up in Debauchery? But Lasciviousness is the least of their Crimes. The *Bacchanals* are Schools of all the Villanies that have been practised in our Days. There Calumnies are invented, unjust Accusations formed, false Acts forged, and all other Instruments made which are fit for the Ruin of Families. The Evil is contagious. A Plague would not threaten us with a more

universal Desolation. Neither the Republick, nor your Estates, nor Lives are safe, as long as these Assemblies continue. Let us then lose no Time in exterminating this impious Society. Perhaps these Fanaticks are this instant forming seditious Projects to oppose our prudent Deliberations. Who knows whether this Libertinism, by which their Union is formed, will not degenerate into Fury. And Rage and Despair often give Courage to the most effeminate. Besides, these People, notwithstanding their Ef-feminacy, are used to shed Blood. They dip their Hands in it every Day. The Grove where they assemble is as much polluted by Murders, as Impurities. Though *Romans*, they have no Regard either for their Relations, Friends, or fellow-Citizens. They have no Attachment to any Persons whatsoever, but those of their own impious Society. Pleasure brings them together, and Interest unites them. Should they break out, how dangerous may it prove to the Republick ! Let us prevent them therefore whilst they are buried in Drunkenness. Your Ancestors spared no Punishment, when they were to extirpate foreign Religions. With what Zeal did they proscribe strange Gods, pretended prophetical Books, all Sacrifices which were different from ours, and all the Oriental Customs ? And these Things were very acceptable to our ancient Gods, who, because they saw themselves affronted in secret by the infamous Pollutions of these *Bacchanalians* ,

‘ *Bacchanalians*, have therefore brought them to light, that they might be punished and suppressed. The Senate have given me and my Colleague an uncommon Commission to enquire after them ; and we have given the proper Orders for the Security of the Publick. Do you therefore, every one in his Station, pay a ready Obedience to the inferior Magistrates, whom we have intrusted with the Care of the Watch ; and join your Endeavours to prevent any Danger or Tumult from these wicked Associates.

The People were well satisfied with the Steps taken by the Senate and *Consuls* ; and gave Orders for Enquiry to be made after the Criminals. They offered a Reward to any who would inform against them, or give Notice of their Escape ; and threatned those with Fines, who should facilitate their Flight, buy their Moveables and Effects, or promote their Escape. As for the Accused, a Day was fixed for their Appearance, but longer Time was allowed those, who should be out of *Italy*. And as *Postumius*’s Harangue had alarmed the City, the Terror soon spread into the *Provinces*. At *Rome* Guards were set in all Parts. The *Triumviri* caused a great Number of these Wretches to be arrested. Several of them in vain endeavoured to save themselves by a speedy Flight ; they were seized, and brought to *Rome*. Some Men, and some Women, killed themselves. A Report was spread that the Number of the Associates amounted to seven Thousand. It was agreed,

C 2 that

that the Heads of the Association were *M.* and *L. Catinius*, both *Roman Citizens*; one *L. Opiturnius*, an Inhabitant of *Falerii*; and one *Minius Cerrinius*, a Native of *Capua*. These were the Priests who presided at these impious Sacrifices, and were the Authors of all the Abominations of the Society. Great Care was therefore taken to seize them immediately, and their Trial was brought on without Delay. The Number of the Fugitives increased daily; and the *Prætors* were obliged to allow their Creditors a Month, to come and prove their Debts. Even in this populous City, the Detention was sensible. The *Consuls* were therefore obliged to go in Person to the Towns, and Markets, in the Neighbourhood, to search out the Offenders, and try them upon the Spot. They who were only *initiated*, that is, had only pronounced the Form of the Oath whereby they engaged themselves, but had not polluted themselves with any of the Crimes of the Sect, were only imprisoned. They who were found guilty of the most monstrous Debaucheries, Murders, false Witness, and counterfeiting Bonds and Seals, were executed. And these were the greatest Number. As for the Women, they were delivered up to their Relations for them to punish them. The Publick were not concerned to chastise them, till such Time as their Families had shewed them so much Indulgence as to spare them. The Grove where these Assemblies were held was cut down; and not only in *Rome*, but all over *Italy*, the Houses appropriated

priated to these Conventicles were demolished. Nothing was spared but the old Altars, and the old Statues of *Bacchus*. And laitly, the Senate passed a Decree, that if any Family had for Time immemorial enjoyed a Right of solemnizing a Feast to this God, they should give the *Prætor* Notice of it; That the *Prætor* should acquaint the Senate with it, when there were at least an Hundred Senators in the House; and that if the Family obtained Leave to worship *Bacchus*, there should not more than five Persons meet together for that Purpose, and should not have any Power either to chuse Priests, or settle any Foundations for the Maintenance of this Worship. When the *Consul Postumius* was returned to *Rome*, he made it his first Busines to prevail on the Senate to give an honourable Reward to *Æbutius* and *Hispala*; and the *Questors* were ordered to pay to each a hundred thousand * *Asses* of Brass. Then, by a Decree of the People, *Postumius* got the Informer exempted from the Duty of serving in the Army, either on Foot or on Horseback; and *Hispala* was invested in all the Privileges of Women, who had always been of free Condition. She had Leave given her to acquire, or alienate an Estate, independently of her *Patrons*; Power
to

to choose her own Guardian; was freed from any Dependence on the Family, which had given her Freedom; had Liberty to marry whom she pleased; and it was declared, not to be beneath any Man to marry her. And lastly, the present and succeeding *Prætors* were ordered to take her under their Protection, and secure her from all Violence and Insults. All these Regulations were made by the *Comitia*; and the *Consuls* were empowered to reward the other Witnesses according to their Merit.

N. B. *This happened in the Year of Rome 567, when Sp. Postumius Albinus, and Q. Marcius Philippus were Consuls.*

F I N I S.